

Carlisle Conservation Commission
May 9, 2013

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, Chair Kelly Guarino called the meeting to order in the Clark Room at the Town Hall at 7:35 p.m. Also present were Vice Chair Luke Ascolillo and Commissioners Tom Brown, Tom Brownrigg, Peter Burn, Jen Bush and Lee Tatistcheff. Conservation Administrator Willard was also present.

Minutes: *Brownrigg moved to approve the minutes of March 14, 2013 as amended, Burn seconded and all voted in favor. Brownrigg moved to approve the minutes of March 28, 2013 as amended, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.*

Conservationist of the Year Award: Willard reported that a Call for Nominations has been placed in the *Carlisle Mosquito* for the next two weeks.

Benfield Housing Update: Willard reported having attended the Benfield Farms Affordable Housing groundbreaking ceremony on May 6, 2013. (Chocolates - courtesy of NOAH - were circulated) Brownrigg reported having walked the Benfield Conservation Land trail for which access is now open on South Street, and he reported it being easy to use with no obstructions.

Towle & Benfield Mowing: Willard reported having placed a Request for Bid in the *Carlisle Mosquito* for the annual mowing agreements for Towle Field and the Benfield Conservation Land.

Draft Wetland Regulations - Response: The deadline for comments to the proposed revisions has been extended to May 30, 2013. Willard said she is in the process of drafting a response based on comments discussed at the Commission's April 11, 2013 meeting.

Open Space & Recreation Report: Willard said the Open Space and Recreation Committee is now in the final editing phase, with preliminary comments due by May 10, 2013. There will be an opportunity for final comments at the upcoming public meeting, for which the date has not yet been set.

Benfield Conservation Land Maintenance: Brown informed the Commission that he will attend the Housing Authority meeting on May 28 to discuss sharing financial responsibility for the maintenance of the well and septic field for the Benfield Farms Senior Housing Development.

7:45 p.m. (DOA-303) Request for Determination

Applicant: Michael Drinkwater

Project Location: Greenough Land

Project Description: Buckthorn Removal

Eagle Scout candidate Michael Drinkwater was present to discuss his proposed project involving maintenance of an existing trail on the Greenough Land. The work will include the removal of invasive Buckthorn growing along the Wood Duck Trail. The work will be conducted under the supervision of scout supervisors and pack leaders. They propose to start the plant removal at the edge of the parking lot off of Maple Street and continue along the trail up to the Billerica line. They will remove plants using hand tools including spades and loppers (and will be the first to test out the Commission's recently purchased Weed Wrench®). The pulled plants will be placed with roots up at a minimum of 20' off the trail in order to prevent regrowth. The group will also be cleaning up trash and debris at the parking lot, but this work was not included in the RDA because it is not within the Commission's wetlands jurisdiction. The work date is scheduled for June 8, 2013, with a rain date of June 15, 2013. Although a specific sign-up list has not been finalized, Drinkwater estimates a work crew comprised of between 10 and 20 scouts and leaders.

Willard noted that the RDA was also concurrently submitted to Natural Heritage and Endangered Species for review due to the fact that the proposed work is in Rare Species Habitat.

A response has not yet been received. Brownrigg asked that the exact location of the work be clearly marked on a locus map on file so that the area can be monitored for regrowth. Guarino requested that the scout return after the work is completed in order to provide a report, including before and after photos. Trails Committee member Louise Hara, who was present for the discussion, cautioned the scout about the presence of poison ivy at the edge of the parking lot, which reportedly grows lushly to about 4 feet, particularly at the edge along the road. Drinkwater said that he is aware of the necessary precautions and will be conducting the removal under the direct supervision of the troop leader.

Tatistcheff moved to issue a Negative Determination B3, the work described in the Request is within the Buffer Zone, as defined in the regulations, but will not alter an Area subject to protection under the Act. Therefore, said work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent. Brown seconded and all voted in favor.

Because the Commission is responsible for managing the town-owned Greenough Land, Guarino noted that a Land Use Permit will also be required in order to allow the work. *Tatistcheff moved to issue a Land Use Permit to Eagle Scout Candidate Michael Drinkwater to conduct trail maintenance work on the Wood Duck Trail at the Greenough Land as described, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.*

8:10 p.m. (DEP #125-0936) Notice of Intent, Continued Hearing

Applicant: Town of Carlisle, Gleason Public Library

Location: 22 Bedford Road

Project Description: Repair of an existing sewage disposal system

Guarino opened the Continued Hearing under the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Carlisle Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The hearing was continued to May 23, 2013 at 8:00 p.m. pending a public hearing before the Board of Health due to request for waivers from their local regulations.

Towle Field Maintenance Public Input Meeting: Commissioner Bush recused herself from the discussion. Guarino said the Commission had scheduled time on the agenda to provide a specific forum for bringing out public comments relative to the maintenance of Towle Field. She opened the discussion by providing some background on the topic for those in the audience. She said that generally the Commission's status quo for maintaining Towle Field has been to mow twice per season – with the first cutting including only a perimeter mow, followed by one full mowing. Twice mowing is an increase from once per year as had been done for many years. Last year a farmer had attempted to hay a portion of the field, but it was not conducive to handling due to the presence of poison ivy. In the farther past, the town had arranged to bring in sheep for intensive grazing. The Commission also received a proposal for hand removal along the parking lot and trail into the field, but it was prohibitively expensive.

A Baseline Assessment (2007) and a Management Plan (2010) for Towle Field were developed by the Land Stewardship Committee. Goals identified in the Management Plan prioritized maintaining/restoring the grassland-nesting habitat for Bobolinks and other wildlife, providing vistas, providing for passive recreation, including the perimeter of the field and cross field trails, and historic preservation and educational opportunities such as bird watching. Action items identified in the Plan relative to field maintenance include determining an appropriate mowing frequency while continuing maintenance mowing, seeking the services of an independent wildlife habitat professional in order to evaluate options for removing nuisance and invasive plants, growth of tree islands in middle of field, vegetation along the stream. Other goals include monitoring Bobolink use of the field, removing dead/diseased maples along Westford Street, field edge clearing, and maintaining a record of all maintenance activities.

In addition to the Commission's implementing a more aggressive mowing schedule at Towle during the previous growing season, Tom Brownrigg had enlisted the assistance of Mike Sawyers of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Landowner Incentive Program to survey invasive species at the site. Subsequent to the site visit, Sawyers provided Brownrigg with a report which included recommended actions for wildlife habitat enhancement and management. Brownrigg said that half of the field is overgrown with poison ivy and glossy buckthorn, which may have an impact on the presence of grassland birds, including Bobolinks. As an avid

birdwatcher, Brownrigg said he had observed Bobolinks at Towle until the 2010 breeding season, with a marked decline in number of birds over the last ten years. He attributed the decline to the loss of appropriate habitat including tall grasses, wildflowers and forbs, which are being crowded out by the invasives. The report provided by Sawyer recommended the use of herbicides to control the invasives. Ted Elliman, Vegetation Management Coordinator at New England Wild Flower (NEWFS) concurred with this recommendation.

Brownrigg said the Commission had been in the process of implementing a more aggressive mowing schedule last year to include five mowings, but they do not yet know how effective this was, as the plants have not yet fully emerged. Tatistcheff said that the report submitted by Sawyers compared several approaches, including grazing as a methodology, but found that the target area tends to be equally grazed so it does not necessarily promote the plants we want to retain. Burning is not a good solution for poison ivy because the fumes are dangerous, plowing and replanting risks disturbing the soil and encouraging invasives.

Guarino said that the Commission now realizes that they need to be doing more to address the issues and they are hoping for input this evening as far as what people would like to see at Towle Field.

Land Steward Warren Lyman said he thought the direction Brownrigg is suggesting is a good one and it is consistent with the Management Plan for Towle Field. He asked Brownrigg to summarize the estimated costs for using herbicides to control the invasives, suggesting that perhaps the Commission could obtain CPC funding for rehabilitation of the field. Brownrigg said that Sawyer's report included a cost comparison, which indicated that herbicide use is a fairly low cost alternative. Guarino noted that the Commission has discussed the idea of applying for CPC funding to address maintenance activities for all of Towle Field including field edge clearing, maple tree replacement in an attempt to restore the whole property.

Resident Judy Asarkoff said she liked the report in that it included two different types of chemical treatment options. She said that upon further research, she found that spraying is not always effective, as you have to get it into the roots of each individual plant, which can be expensive. Brownrigg said that New England Wildflower Society (NEWFS) recommended doing a mowing first in order to stimulate growth of the poison ivy, followed by a foliar spraying when it is resetting its leaves using a backpack sprayer targeting just the PI and Buckthorn. Brownrigg said that the report from Sawyer also included information on alternative herbicides, with the conclusion being that foliar herbicide treatments are primarily defoliant, with the probability that the leaves will grow back, requiring a retreatment schedule, whereas the use of Roundup or triclopyr are taken into the root system. Tatistcheff noted that triclopyr has a very short degradation period. Brownrigg said that this approach also targets broadleaf species but does not kill grassy vegetation. Trails Committee member Louise Hara said that they have varying views on the subject, but overall they will support whatever the Commission comes up with for a plan. She noted that the committee had discontinued public walks on Towle Field for the last five to ten years because of the presence of poison ivy. Agricultural lessees Kevin Brown and John Bakewell reported having used triclopyr at Fox Hill very successfully in getting the field restored to what it was previously. Land Steward Lynn Knight, who has been working with the SuAsCo Cisma (Sudbury, Assabet, Concord Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) over the past several years, said that she has learned that it would require at least a two- year herbicide effort, with the first year of the herbicide application being most effective. It is then mandatory to follow up during the second year, which is not nearly as expensive because it is primarily just cleanup.

Knight said she also thought there was a need to investigate an appropriate frequency of mowing, whether once per year or possibly every few years would be sufficient in terms of trying to restore grassland habitat. Willard said she had received an email from Steve Hinton, who requested that, in his absence, she please convey to the Conscom the following thought: "If dollars are going to be spent on a restoration, I feel strongly that the objective should be to return the field to a state that can be hayed for agricultural purposes rather a temporary fix to slow down the current problem; the town should look for a permanent solution, a different approach". Asarkoff said that perhaps a portion of the field could be hayed. Brownrigg said he would like to see a balance, providing for both wildlife habitat and some agricultural use, but there are no fields in Carlisle other than Towle that would be suitable for Bobolinks.

Burn said that, while the field and meadow argument is very compelling, there is a decent amount of people out there who would say, a field that you can't walk through or use for recreation such as flying a kite, is not going to have the constituency where you could throw a Frisbee or have a picnic with your family. "When we make this decision, we are going to have to weigh these both heavily."

Towle Field mower, Jack O'Connor, said he would like to pose a bit of opposition to the point that persistent mowing will not get rid of poison ivy because the roots will persist. He said that the roots cannot persist if they don't have leaves associated with them of any substantial size to support the root growth. He said he did not want to spend a lot of time mowing at Towle Field, but is suggesting that the Commission look at the biology of this more closely. Asarkoff said she was aware of a project at Clark Farm where they tried removing poison ivy and Buckthorn using various methods. She suggested the Commission ask them what worked at what frequency. She added that grazing would not work if it were only done monthly, as the grazing would need to occur for the duration of the growing season if it is to be effective. Guarino said the Commission would follow up with them.

John Bakewell pointed out the fact that there is an ecological footprint from doing anything - mowing the field five times per season takes time and energy, money and fuel. Also underrated is the resulting soil compaction. Kevin Smith added that mowing could be effective if it were done weekly. Brownrigg noted that you would not encourage regrowth of wildflowers, just grasses.

Guarino thanked everyone for their input and said the Commission would be including time on their agenda again in order to discuss the suggestions and input in greater depth. In the meantime the Commission has scheduled a site visit June 1, 2013 at 9 a.m. to look at the results from the frequent mowing project implemented during the previous season.

8:50 p.m. Steve Carlin, Great Brook Farm State Park - Beaver Dam Removal:

Great Brook Farm State Park Supervisor Steve Carlin and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Engineer Darryl Forgione were present to discuss the recent unpermitted beaver dam breach activity in and around the vicinity of the park. Carlin distributed a map and photos depicting the five locations where beaver dams had been disturbed. Because DCR had been working with a state contractor relative to ongoing beaver management, he was able to provide before and after photographs of the areas of disturbance. He said he became aware of the dam breaching in late April when he was notified of the activity by an abutter who lives downstream from the beaver dams. After he was notified of a potential issue, he conducted a site visit and found there was in fact a serious issue. He then followed DCR's standard protocol of filing an incident report, notifying his management team and contacting both the Carlisle and Chelmsford Conservation Commission offices due to the joint jurisdictions. Shortly thereafter, he conducted a site visit with Sylvia Willard and Chelmsford ConsCom Agent Allison LeFlore and a representative of the Chelmsford Board of Health, Richard Day. Following the site visit, the DEP was notified of the activity by Allison LeFlore. The Tennessee Gas Company had also been notified, and they have evaluated the situation and have reflagged the high pressure gas line in that area.

Carlin said that the beavers have already started to rebuild and the DCR has not disturbed the site at all pending a potential investigation by the DEP. Willard said she has received a call from DEP indicating they are interested in coming out to take a look at the site next week.

Tatistcheff asked if they had any idea who may have removed the beaver dams. Forgione said it looks like the intent was pretty clear, as there was evidence of large equipment tracks and a large boulder was relocated in order to gain access. Carlin said it looks like access was off of Parker Road, down the Tennessee Gas Line to the dam. Brownrigg noted that a boardwalk was damaged as well.

Forgione said that DCR would like to start managing the beavers with water levelers at one location. They would also like to reset the boardwalk by hand to restore public access to the trails, perhaps moving it downward from the beaver dam because it essentially provided a structure for the beavers to build to.

“They are the greatest engineers in the world”, added Forgione. He said that they had been working with state contractor Integrated Wildlife Control (IWC), who will be providing them with a proposal for a plan of action to deal with all of the areas that have been disturbed.

Guarino asked for clarification relative to whether they had been in the process of putting together a filing to install a water leveler before the dam removal activity occurred. Forgione said they had been working with IWC in order to try to find a balance so that the beaver activity is not impacting the homes that are adjacent to the water body. Carlin said that IWC had prepared the “Assessment and Recommendations for Beaver Related Flooding at Great Brook Farm State Park” following a site visit to the five locations where beaver dam disturbance had occurred.

Guarino asked the DCR representatives what would have come before the Commission if the dams had not been breached. Willard noted that if the dams had not been breached they would not be dealing with a potential public health issue; rather it would likely have been a Notice of Intent. Guarino said that the Commission has issued “friendly” Enforcement Orders in the past to allow land owners to deal with these types of issues and suggested they figure out how to let that happen without going through the NOI process. Forgione asked that the Commission consider issuing an Emergency Certificate in order to address the potential public health issue and to avoid the estimated cost of about \$5,000 associated with the filing of a NOI. Guarino said the Commission would consider this after having an opportunity to review the report from IWC and after the DEP has had an opportunity to conduct their site visit.

Also present for the discussion was Chelmsford ConsCom Agent Allison LeFlore, who said their intent is to leave it up to Carlisle relative to the dam repair, as the violation occurred in Carlisle. She said they are available if Carlisle needs any assistance.

The discussion was continued to May 23 following a DEP site visit and decision.

Elliott Preserve Conservation Restriction:

Grant of Conservation Restriction #65: Willard circulated the document for signatures. It will then go to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for signatures, then to Sudbury Valley Trustees, and finally to Irene Del Bono, Director of the EOEEA Conservation Restriction Review Program. The final closing date for the transfer of real estate is May 30, 2013 at 11 a.m. in the Clark Room at Town Hall. *Tatistcheff moved to sign the Conservation Restriction document as presented, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.*

Purchase and Sale Agreement: Willard distributed three copies of the Purchase and Sale Agreement provided by Sudbury Valley Trustees for signatures, which then will go to the BOS for signatures at their May 14, 2013 meeting. *Burn moved to sign the P&S as revised, Tatistcheff seconded and all voted in favor.*

Guarino acknowledged the members of the Elliott family who were present, including Ruth Holmes and Elizabeth Platais, saying “we are very excited to be able to take this next step and very appreciative to the Elliott family”.

9:20 p.m. (DEP #125-0938) Notice of Intent, Continued Hearing

Applicant: Paul Gaboury

Location: 82 Johnson Road

Project Description: Grading associated with the installation of a septic system

Guarino opened the continued hearing under the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Carlisle Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The hearing had been continued pending a review of the septic system plan by the Board of Health and additional information from the applicant relative to the proposed tree clearing. At the previous hearing, the applicant was informed that he would be required to provide a plan which identifies the location, species and diameter of all trees over 8 to 10 inches in diameter that are proposed for removal, as well as providing a proposal for post-tree removal stabilization of the area for the Commission’s review. Ben Ewing of Stamski and McNary presented the requested documents. He said the plan has received Board of Health approval.

.The proposed area for breakout grading for the septic will be loamed and seeded and the cleared area is to be raked and seeded with conservation seed mix in order to stabilize it following the tree removal.

Bush noted that if the homeowner wishes to plant trees in the future to replace what was there, it would require another filing, suggesting the applicant carefully consider this before undertaking the tree removal.

Burn moved to close the hearing for DEP #125-0938, Tatistcheff seconded and all voted in favor.

Guarino noted that the proposed tree removal/planting plan sketch that had been submitted is now part of the permanent record and that any future plantings will require an additional filing. Brown moved to issue a Standard Order of Conditions with the Special Condition requiring that the area of land that will be cleared and become lawn is to be planted with conservation seed mix and with the Continuing Condition allowing the manual removal of invasive plant species. Burn seconded the motion, all voted in favor with the exception of Bush who opposed and Burn who abstained.

Cranberry Bog – Unauthorized Trail: Chelmsford Conservation Agent Allison LeFlore had offered to provide an update on the unauthorized trail that had been constructed on a portion of the Cranberry Bog Land and the adjacent Chelmsford Conservation Land. She said Chelmsford ConsCom had met with the Carlisle Cranberry Bog Committee in January to discuss options for dealing with the unauthorized trail and had come up with a proposal to reroute portions of the trail. However, the Chelmsford ConsCom is now interested in attempting to close the trail completely because it runs through what is considered to be their most environmentally sensitive area, as they have records of river otter, deer, a coyote den and signs of bear in this area. She reported a marked reduction in wildlife activity since the trail had been constructed. LeFlore distributed a map showing locations of the trail as it runs through both Carlisle and Chelmsford, a portion of which looked to be very close to the Tennessee Gas Line gas line but was found to be approximately 500 feet away.

Tatistcheff said that if people are making trails because they feel they need a loop, completely closing it seemed unduly harsh when there are alternatives. She said she thought it would be worthwhile to investigate rerouting it. LeFlore said that Chelmsford will be going out and posting signs relative to the environmental impacts of the unauthorized trail as a first step. A fall back would be rerouting the trail from the wetter areas because it would be difficult to maintain and they are already seeing another trail off the unauthorized trail constructed to avoid the wet areas. Tatistcheff said the reroute provides the water views they obviously want, but it would be more sustainable to bring it up to the upland allowing it to get closer to the water where possible.

Bush said she would like to visit the site to inspect the area and LeFlore said she would be happy to meet with members of the Commission at the trail. Guarino said that the majority of the trail is located in Chelmsford and if they are planning on closing their portion then it may not be worth it to maintain the section that runs through Carlisle. LeFlore said she hoped the signage would help in making people aware of the negative impacts the trail has had on wildlife habitat. She offered to drop off several signs for posting on the Carlisle portion of the trail during the next week or two.

Tatistcheff moved that the Commission will make efforts to close the Carlisle portion of the trail as a first stage in cooperation with Chelmsford, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.

Tatistcheff moved to adjourn, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Hopkins
Administrative Assistant

DOCUMENT REGISTER:

-photos from Steve Carlin, Supervisor – Great Brook Farm State Park

- sketch from Gaboury filing – trees to be removed
- sketch from Chelmsford ConsCom re unauthorized trail